

Putting IPM to Work in Schools and Institutions

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The Need

There is increasing awareness of and interest in reducing pesticide use in schools, institutions and public places. Most of the schools in the Clinton, Essex and Franklin County region are small and grounds staff is unable to attend regional turf programs offered in Albany. They need a day-long program within an hour's drive to learn about IPM programs and how they could put them to work in their facilities. Some schools have adopted a "no pesticide" policy. One school had a chemically sensitive student who had to be tutored at home. The interest and need for this kind of program is definitely there.

The Response

In response to this need, Amy Ivy, project leader and Extension Educator in Essex and Clinton Counties and Lynn Braband, project collaborator and Extension Educator with the NYS IPM program in Geneva, designed a day-long education and awareness program, *Putting IPM to Work in Schools and Institutions*. The objectives of this program were to explain why and how to initiate an IPM program, to teach specific IPM management strategies for structures and grounds and to convince managers to adopt an IPM program at their facility. In addition, Master Gardener volunteers who answer homeowner questions on household pests and yard care also benefited from this learning opportunity.

The day-long program ran from 9:00-3:30 and covered the following topics:

District Policy Development – Lynn Braband, NYS IPM Program

Regional DEC Pesticide Rules & Regulations – John Bennett, Region 5 DEC

Common Problems with Woody Landscape Plants – Amy Ivy

IPM for Indoor Pest Problems – Rich Muscarella, Pest Control Consultant, Buffalo, NY

IPM for Turf and Athletic Fields – Jennifer Grant, NYS IPM Program

98% of the evaluation respondents rated these segments as very helpful to them.

The Audience:

A total of 32 people from the industry attended, plus 9 Master Gardeners. The breakdown is as follows:

19 from public schools grounds & maintenance staff

4 from hospital grounds & maintenance staff

2 from DEC
6 from summer camps, campgrounds and public parks
1 from the horticulture department of a correctional facility
10 Master Gardener volunteers

This was the first program held by Cornell Cooperative Extension in Essex or Clinton County that attracted such a large public school audience. Within a few months since this program 4 attendees have called our office with follow-up questions. This program was successful in connecting with this new audience and establishing Extension as a credible local resource.

Evaluation responses included the following audience information:

The topics that were of particular interest to them before coming to the program were pest management policy development and DEC updates, closely followed by turf and athletic field management and indoor pest management. Problems with landscape plants was listed by one third of the respondents.

Just over half the respondents indicated they used pesticides only as a last resort, a third said they applied them as needed, one never uses pesticides. Just over half use a pest control company to apply pesticides and the other half applies them themselves.

In the Before and After section of the evaluation, 19 out of 22 respondents indicated an improvement in their understanding of How to adopt a pest management policy and How to manage pest problems indoors, followed by 18 respondents whose understanding increased about DEC rules and regulations pertaining to schools and public buildings and How to avoid problems in the landscape. Sixteen respondents increased their understanding of how to decide if a pesticide is necessary to control a problem and how to manage athletic fields.

Here are topics they would like to see covered in future IPM programs:

2-Turfgrass and its care
athletic fields
more on turf IPM
More on IPM
Walk throughs, what to look for, how much is too much? Pest thresholds, management techniques
Continued topics on ice storm damage
More on natural controls, less on pesticides
More on 3a ornamentals and turf, recert credits in Plattsburgh and Glens Falls area
Set up a program in one school district and initiate some training
Raccoons, bats, skunks

Program Outcomes

As a result of this program:

The communication and collaboration between public school maintenance departments and Cornell Cooperative Extension was enhanced. Twelve new schools learned of the resources available to them from their local county Extension offices.

Many attendees did not realize until this program that they could not use even wasp spray without being certified. It became obvious from watching the audience's faces and reactions that many of them have not been in compliance with NYS pesticide laws. This program definitely increased their awareness.

Many attendees did not know much about the pests they are trying to control. Many commented during the section on indoor pests about using foggers over the weekends to control lice in the classroom. Lice control strategies were an excellent real-life illustration to them about how important it is to know the life cycle of the pest you are trying to control before choosing a management plan. Some of the new contacts for our office didn't know until then they could have called us for this life cycle information.

A request for follow-up training was made by the BOCES Health and Safety Officer, Dan Riley. We arranged a day-long training in June with Lynn Braband and Jennifer Grant specifically for schools, to explain which products fall under the 48 hour notification law and what it would take for each school to certify at least one person in their maintenance department.

As a result of the June program, we are coordinating a 30 hour training program for the fall of 2001 to get school staff certified. Our purpose is to allow staff to quickly deal with a pest problem quickly, with least toxic products, to avoid having to call in a PCO and wait until they can get there.

Here are some specific practices that they used to do that they would no longer do as a result of attending this program (from the program evaluations):

- Spray insects with over the counter sprays (in school)
- Be careless with spray cans
- Use lice killer on fabric and carpets
- Dig hole for trees deep instead of wide
- Fog for lice
- Waste time fertilizing trees
- Spray bees
- Apply pesticides on all greens as a preventative if pest is found on 1 or 2 greens

Here are some practices that they learned at the program and plan to use in the future (from the program evaluations):

- Care of trees
- IPM on indoor pests
- Ant control with bait
- Endopytic grasses
- Question pesticide salesmen on amount and quantity of pesticides to use
- Not worry about fall webworms
- Use least toxic pesticides like boric acid instead of more toxic pesticides
- Use specific types of bee and mouse traps
- Manage pests indoors with the least amount of pesticides
- Be aware of potential allergic reaction to pyrethrin spray
- Several ideas, especially IPM

In Summary

This program was a success because it made new connections between public schools and their local Cornell Cooperative Extension offices, made some people aware that some of their pest management practices (i.e. using wasp spray) must stop until they become certified, convinced many people that becoming certified would actually improve and simplify their pest control problems by enabling them to deal problems in their earliest stages, and illustrated how valuable it is to know about the pest or problem you are trying to control.